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NEGATION
LAWBRINGER
Tony Bedard
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Laura Villari

The God-Emperor CHARON conquered His chaotic universe and forged an intergalactic empire known as:

the Negation

This conquest was so epic in scale that it beggars description. From every corner of creation and through every stratum of reality, each knee was made to bend in fealty to the will of Charon.

Today, the Negation fleet comprises warships beyond count and soldiers from thousands of worlds serve the Imperium. Regional governors look to the Throneworld for guidance and the mighty Lawbringers punish those planets foolish enough to defy imperial directives. But it was not always so.

Charon s rise to power began on a single world, whose humble inhabitants imagined themselves to be the sole intelligent life forms in all the firmament. The tale of His origin is shrouded in mystery, for it includes secrets that would bring swift death to those foolhardy enough to pass them on...

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CGE

NOK NOK NOK
...AND AS THE HOUR OF MY DEATH APPROACHES -- SCRATCH THAT -- CREEPS EVER CLOSER...
...I CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER WHAT OTHER PATHS MY LIFE MIGHT HAVE TAKEN. PERIOD. NEW PARAGRAPH...
Sktch Sktch
A BIT MORBID, DON'T YOU THINK?
NOK NOK
WE'RE BUSY! PLEASE COME BACK LATER!
IT WOULD BE MORBID, TOLNIM, WERE THEY YOUR WORDS. WHEN YOU REACH MY AGE YOU'LL FIND DEATH NO LONGER SEEMS SO MALIGNANT.
IT'S MORE LIKE AN OLD FRIEND DROPPING BY TO---
NOK NOK NOK
ONE MOMENT, SIR...
...I'LL GET RID OF THIS PEST.

...
EXCUSE ME...
...DID YOU WRITE THIS?
FALLEN STARS

...NO. THAT WOULD BE MASTER MEROH --
THANK YOU.
POP
WHAT WAS THAT?!
HELLO..?
TOLNIM, WHO IS IT?! WHAT IS HAPPENING?
I HAVE DISMISSED YOUR ASSISTANT.
YOU ARE MEROH, THE SCHOLAR?

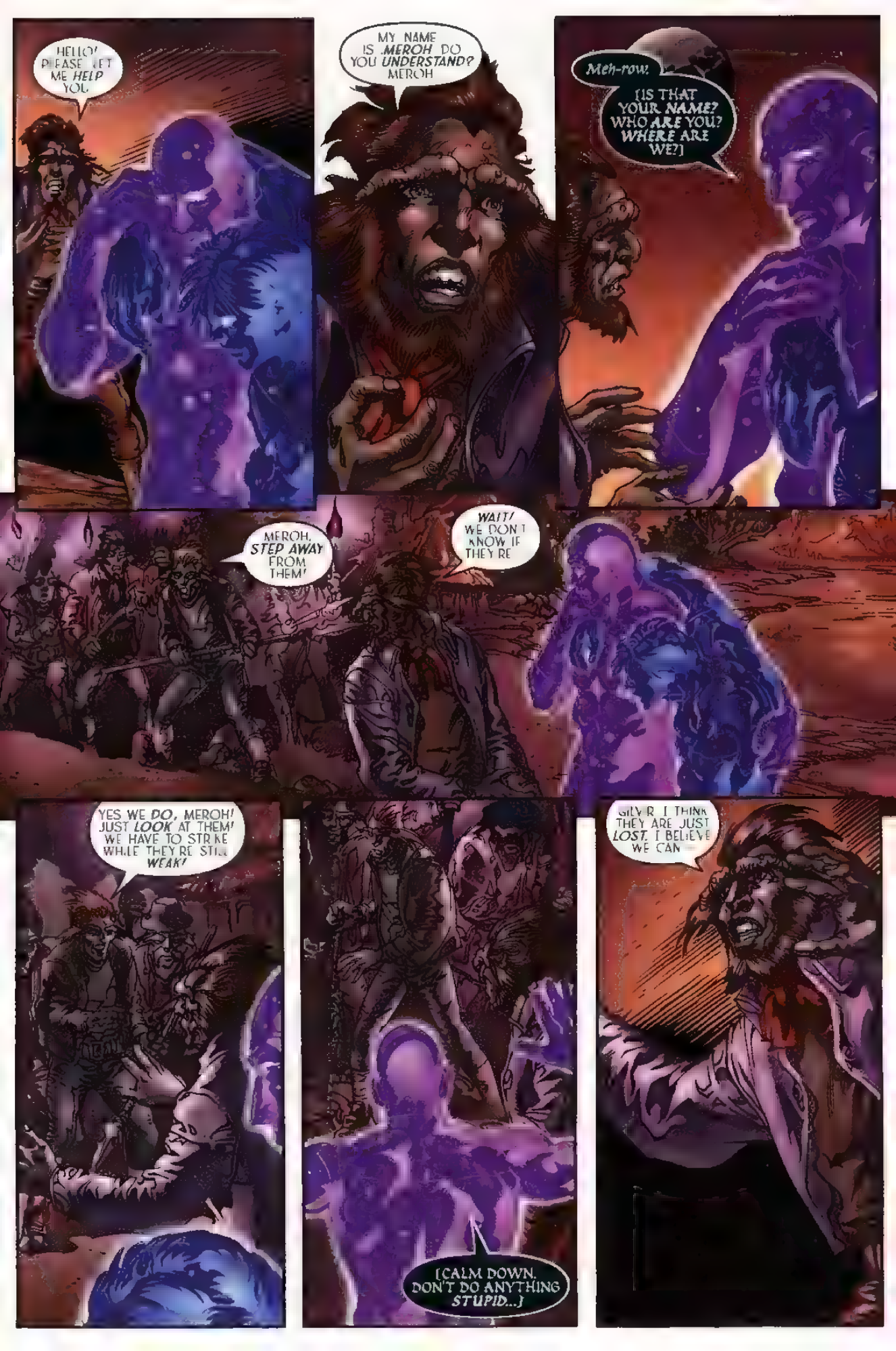
...YES.
MY APOLOGIES, BUT...HAVE WE *MET* BEFORE?
NO, WE HAVE NOT.
I DIDN'T THINK I'D FORGET A VOICE LIKE YOURS. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, MISTER...?
YOU ARE RENOWNED FOR YOUR SCIENTIFIC AND HISTORICAL TEXTS. BUT *THIS* BOOK, *FALLEN STARS*, IS YOUR SOLE WORK OF *FICTION*.
EXCEPT IT IS *NOT* FICTION... *IS* IT?
HE SENT YOU, DIDN'T HE?
HE SHOULD HAVE SLAIN ME BACK *THEN*, RATHER THAN MAKE ME *VOW* NEVER TO TELL HIS TALE--
-- OR WHAT *LITTLE* I KNOW OF IT.
BAD ENOUGH THAT I FORFEITED MY *SIGHT*, BUT FOR A SEEKER OF TRUTH, *SILENCE* CAN BE THE WORST PUNISHMENT...

GILVIR! VIDO! COME *LOOK* AT THIS.
WHAT *IS* IT?
I DON'T KNOW.
THIS BODES ILL, MY FRIENDS...
...A BAD STAR SUDDENLY APPEARING LIKE THAT. IT'S A PORTENT OF DOOM.
Oh, *VIDO--!* HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I *TOLD* YOU? THERE IS A SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION FOR *EVERYTHING!*
THEN EXPLAIN *THAT!*

"I KNEW I HAD WITNESSED THE *IMPOSSIBLE*: FALLING STARS *DO NOT* SUDDENLY CHANGE DIRECTION.
"A METEOR IS JUST A CHUNK OF *ROCK* FROM THE HEAVENS. IT HAS NO *MIND* OF ITS OWN.
...Gungharreet...
GYUHarckIARR!
"I WAS EVERY BIT AS FRIGHTENED AS MY FRIENDS, BUT MY CURIOSITY *REFUSED* TO LET ME FLEE."

"THE TRUTH IS THAT MY OWN LIFE WAS WORTH *LESS* TO ME THAN FINDING OUT WHAT THIS BLUE BEING WAS.
Nuugh... nuugh...
BE *CALM*, STRANGER. LISTEN TO MY *VOICE*. THAT'S RIGHT...CAN YOU TELL I'M NO *THREAT* TO YOU?
Aaaghla *BLUGH* yalma *NUUGH*...!
VERY WELL, SO *THIS* FALLEN STAR *DID* HAVE A MIND...BUT ONE THAT SEEMED SEVERELY *DEMENTED*. AT FIRST, WE COULD NOT COMMUNICATE AT ALL...
"...AND THE ONLY THING I KNEW FOR A FACT WAS THAT THE WORLD HAD *CHANGED* WITH HIS ARRIVAL."

"THE STELLAR PHENOMENON WHICH HAD BIRTHED THE BLUE STRANGER LEFT ITS MARK IN THE SKY--A *RING* THAT WOULD GIRD THE PLANET FOR MONTHS TO COME.
"THE SPECTACLE OF A BAND OF LIGHT COALESCING ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY NEARLY MADE ME FORGET THAT A SECOND, *VIOLET* METEOR HAD ACCOMPANIED THE BLUE ONE.
"AND THEN I HEARD A VOICE AND KNEW THAT THE MYSTERIES ABOVE *PALED* BESIDE THOSE CONFRONTING ME ON THE GROUND.
!CHARON! GET...UP! !
!...SOMETHING WENT *WRONG*... HARD TO *THINK*...!
"I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND HIM, BUT AT LEAST THE VIOLET ONE SEEMED TO BE SPEAKING MORE THAN JUST *GIBBERISH*."
...Guhglarruptule...


HELLO! PLEASE LET ME HELP YOU.
MY NAME IS MEROH. DO YOU UNDERSTAND? MEROH
Meh-row.
[IS THAT YOUR NAME? WHO ARE YOU? WHERE ARE WE?]
MEROH, STEP AWAY FROM THEM!
WAIT! WE DON'T KNOW IF THEY'RE
YES WE DO, MEROH! JUST LOOK AT THEM! WE HAVE TO STRIKE WHILE THEY'RE STILL WEAK!
[CALM DOWN. DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID...]
SILVER, I THINK THEY ARE JUST LOST. I BELIEVE WE CAN

DIE, MONSTER!
IF ONLY GAVR HAD LISTENED
I WOULD HAVE REMINDED HIM THAT THE STRANGERS HAD SURVIVED A FALL FROM THE HEAVENS.
WHAT GOOD COULD A SPEAR DO AGAINST SUCH BEINGS?

THE OTHERS QUICKLY REALIZED HOW UNTENABLE THEIR POSITION WAS
"THE VIOLET ONE SEEMED NO LESS SURPRISED THAN GILVIR THAT HE'D CAST SUCH A THUNDERBOLT BUT SOMETHING WAS *WRONG* WITH HIS STRANGE, NEWFOUND POWER
SKZZLE
SKZZLE
Ahhh...!
SHRAKT
" *DANGEROUSLY* WRONG
COME, STRANGER, BACK ON YOUR FEET YOU LOOK MORE *CONFUSED* THAN INJURED
PLEASE *FORGIVE* THEM *FEAR* MADE THEM FOOLISH
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, AROUND THESE PARTS WE'RE FAMOUS FOR OUR *HOSPITALITY*
Ohhh...
'I LOOKED INTO HIS EYES, HALF EXPECTING TO SEE MY OWN DEATH IN THEM.'

INSTEAD, WHAT I FOUND LOOKED MORE LIKE A KINDRED SPIRIT
APPOLYON.
MY LORD'S GREAT ADVERSARY.
NOT AT *FIRST*, HE WASN'T
AT FIRST, HE WAS CHARON'S STAUNCHEST *ALLY*
YOUR COMPANION HAS YET TO SPEAK COHERENTLY, EVEN IN *YOUR OWN* TONGUE
THE DOCTORS FEAR HIS *MIND* WAS DAMAGED WAS HE *ALWAYS* THUS?
NO, FRIEND MEROH. HE WAS *BRILLIANT*.
I HAD CONVINCED MY PEOPLE THAT OUR BEST PENANCE FOR ATTACKING THE STRANGERS WAS TO NURSE THEM BACK TO HEALTH
FACED WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN *BEFRIENDING* THEM OR BEING *DESTROYED* BY THEM, IT WAS A FAIRLY *EASY* DECISION
BUT OUR PASSAGE HERE... *DID* SOMETHING TO US. SOMETHING PUSHED OUR SANITY TO THE *BRINK*.
IT HAD ONLY TAKEN APPOLYON TWO DAYS TO MASTER OUR LANGUAGE

SOMEHOW, I WAS LESS AFFECTED THAN CHARON...OR THE OTHERS. IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THEIR MINDS ARE BEYOND REPAIR.
=GASP=
WHAT OTHERS?
THAT BRIGHT LINE ACROSS YOUR SKY. IT'S...
...blah... blah...
WELL, PERHAPS SHOWING YOU WOULD BE BETTER. WE SHALL HAVE TO --
BLACK FIRE?
OR SHOULD IT BE SOME OTHER COLOR?
Oh, YES...
MADNESS HAD ONLY SLIGHTLY RELINQUISHED ITS HOLD ON CHARON'S MIND --
'--ENOUGH SO THAT WE COULD ALL WORK TOGETHER ON THE MYSTERY OF THEIR ARRIVAL
CHARON AND APPOLYON WERE MEN OF SCIENCE LIKE MYSELF THEY CLAIMED THEY CAME FROM A PLACE WHERE THE LAWS OF PHYSICS ARE FIXED AND IMMUTABLE
'I COUNTERED THAT NOTWEN'S FIRST AXIOM OF PROBABILITY FLUX ENSURES SUCH A PLACE COULD NEVER EXIST"

THE RUIN OF THESE OUTLANDISH NOTIONS I DISPROVED

THE ARCH ARRIVED HIS WORST NIGHTMARE HAD COME TO FRUITION

NO... NO...NO...

APPOLYON! DO YOU REALIZE WHAT WE'VE DONE?!

I HAD COME TO REGARD APPOLYON AS THE MORE *POWERFUL* OF THE TWO, SINCE HE HAD ARRIVED IN BETTER CONDITION. BUT I HAD GRAVELY *MISREAD* CHARON'S SILENCE

MY BEST GUESS IS THAT WE CAST OURSELVES INTO SOME CORNER OF THE UNIVERSE WHERE PHYSICAL LAWS SOMEHOW CHANGE LIKE THE WEATHER.

IT ONLY OCCURRED TO ME LATER THAT I WAS HEARING APPOLYON *INSIDE* MY HEAD

NO! DON'T YOU SEE?

THE LAWS OF PHYSICS ARE, BY DEFINITION, UNIVERSAL!

NO "CORNER" OF CREATION CAN IGNORE THEM!

IF THEY CHANGED, THEN... WE CHANGED THEM!

WE WRECKED EVERYTHING!

WE HAVE TO SET IT RIGHT, APPOLYON! STARTING WITH THESE POOR WRETCHES...

AS WE APPROACHED THE COSMIC RING NOW ORBITING MY WORLD, I CAME TO SEE THE TINY BODIES COMPRISING IT WERE ACTUALLY *PEOPLE!*

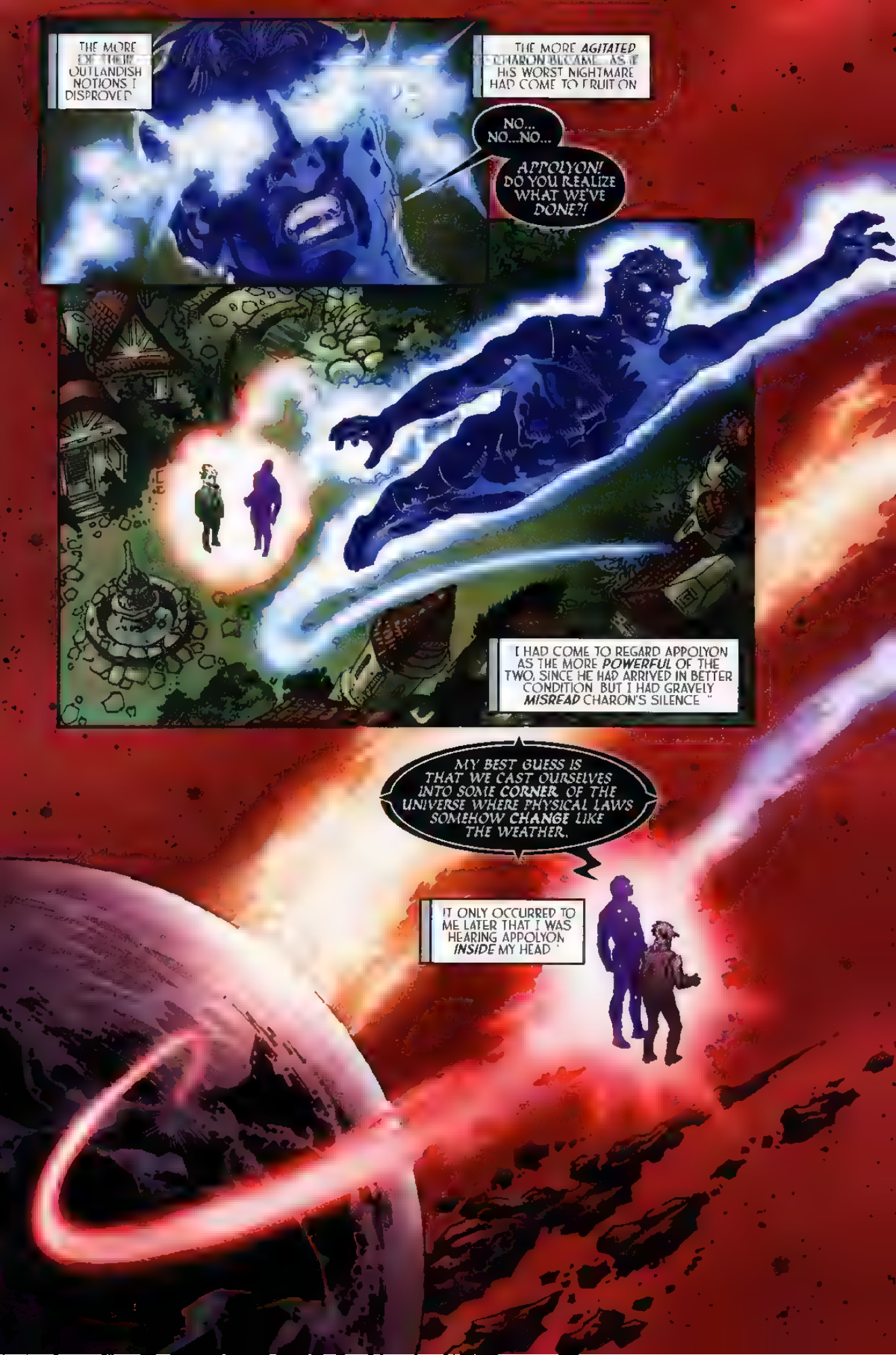
CHARON'S PEOPLE

DORMANT AND STRANGELY MARKED BY THEIR PASSAGE, BUT STILL *ALIVE*

KIND MEROH, YOU HAVE ALREADY HEARD FAR MORE THAN YOU SHOULD. I MUST HAVE YOUR WORD THAT YOU WILL REVEAL NOTHING YOU'VE SEEN TO THE REST OF YOUR PEOPLE.

AGREED?

I COULD HARDLY REFUSE


THE MORE OF THEIR OUTLANDISH NOTIONS I DISPROVED
THE MORE AGITATED CHARON BECAME... AS IF HIS WORST NIGHTMARE HAD COME TO FRUITION
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I MUST HAVE YOUR WORD THAT YOU WILL REVEAL NOTHING YOU'VE SEEN TO THE REST OF YOUR PEOPLE.
AGREED?
I COULD HARDLY REFUSE

AND SO THEY COLLECTED THEIR DORMANT BRETHREN AND *DEPARTED* OUR WORLD, A BIGGER MYSTERY THAN WHEN THEY ARRIVED
I STILL HAD SO MANY QUESTIONS THAT NEEDED ANSWERING. NEVERTHELESS, I WAS *RELIEVED* TO SEE THEM GO."
YOU SEE, I'D BEGUN TO FEEL LIKE THE MOTH DRAWN TOO *CLOSE* TO THE FLAME
SUCH KNOWLEDGE AS THESE BEINGS COULD PROVIDE MUST SURELY *COST* MORE THAN I COULD *AFFORD*
TRUE.
I PRAYED FOR THEIR *RETURN*

I GREW OLD BEFORE MY PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED
SHKOOM
I RECOGNIZED AT ONCE THE COLOR OF THE OBJECT THAT HAD FALLEN NEAR THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN -- APPOLYON WAS BACK
I LONGED TO KNOW WHAT HE AND CHARON HAD DONE SINCE THEIR DEPARTURE
HAD THEY MANAGED TO SAVE THEIR PEOPLE? HAD THEY CORRECTED WHATEVER GREAT WRONG CHARON BELIEVED THEY HAD PERPETRATED?
BUT SOMETHING WAS NOT RIGHT APPOLYON SEEMED DIFFERENT INDEED, AND NOT IN A GOOD WAY
MEROH! IS IT YOU...?
YES
Oh, MY FRIEND... YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN UNDERSTAND...

APPOLYON REACHED OUT WITH HIS MIND AND INSTANTLY *FILLED* MY HEAD WITH HIS OWN *MEMORIES*
SUDDENLY, I SAW CHARON RAGING INCOHERENTLY, VOWING TO *FIX* THE DAMAGE HE HAD WROUGHT
CHARON DECLARED THAT HE WOULD CREATE AN INVINCIBLE *ARMY* TO QUELL THE CHAOS, TO IMPOSE ORDER UPON EVERY LIVING THING IN THE COSMOS
THE PLAN WOULD *REWRITE* THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS. APPOLYON TRIED IN VAIN TO DISSUADE HIM FROM SUCH ANATHEMA
THEN CHARON SOMEHOW *EXPELLED* ALL THE RAGE AND THE MADNESS -- THE VERY *DARKNESS* FROM HIS OWN NATURE -
WHICH MIXED WITH THE ANARCHICAL ENERGIES OF THE VOID, *BIRTHING* HIS NEW ENFORCERS.
HE CHRISTENED THEM *LAWBRINGERS* - THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF HIS WRATH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS -- EACH AN ASPECT OF CHARON'S INFINITE SELF. THEIR TERRIBLE STRENGTH ROOTED IN HIS OWN ENDLESS POWER.

I FOUGHT HIM, MER-OH! AND WHEN HE OVERPOWERED ME, I RAN!
I DON'T THINK YOU CAN EVEN COMPREHEND WHAT HIS PLAN WILL DO TO THE UNIVERSE. HE CERTAINLY DOESN'T!
BUT WHY DID HE NEED LAWBRINGERS? DID HE NEVER FIND A WAY TO REVIVE THE REST OF YOUR PEOPLE? AND
AND WHERE DID YOU GET THOSE WINGS?!
OUR PEOPLE ALL STAND WITH CHARON. THEY'RE AS DERANGED AS HE IS. AS FOR THE WINGS, I HID FOR A TIME IN--
HIDE WHEREVER YOU WISH. I SHALL FIND YOU. CHANGE YOURSELF AND IT WILL AVAIL YOU NAUGHT.
COME TO FINISH THE JOB IN PERSON, eh? TIRED OF SACRIFICING YOUR FREAKS AGAINST ME?
IT IS USELESS TO BAIT ME, APPOLYON. I AM BEYOND ANGER NOW.
I AM NO LONGER THE ADDLED CREATURE YOU ONCE COULD MANIPULATE. I SEE EVERYTHING SO CLEARLY NOW...
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT WAS SOMETHING MORTAL EYES SHOULD NEVER BEHOLD.

"THIS DUEL OF GODS SEEMED TO ECHO THROUGH ALL REALMS AND REALITIES --
"--AS IF THEY EXISTED IN MORE DIMENSIONS THAN I COULD PERCEIVE."
I'M SORRY IT HAD TO END LIKE THIS, APPOLYON. I REALLY HOPED YOU WOULD BE MY RIGHT HAND IN THE HOLY MISSION THAT LIES AHEAD.
BUT I CAN ILL AFFORD YOUR OPPOSITION. TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE.
FOR THE SAKE OF EVERY LIVING SOUL THAT AWAITS MY SALVATION--
--I CONSIGN YOU TO OBLIVION!
WAIT--!!!
AHHH!
"AND IN THE NEXT MOMENT APPOLYON WAS GONE...AND MY EYESIGHT ALONG WITH HIM."

AND FOR THE SAKE OF FRIENDSHIP, HE LET THAT BE THE SOLE PRICE YOU PAID, BUT ONLY IF YOU KEPT HIS SECRETS.
YOU HAD TO KNOW WHEN YOU WROTE THIS THAT IT WAS A BETRAYAL. THESE EVENTS YOU RECOUNT CALL INTO QUESTION HIS VERY DIVINITY.
TAP TAP
I TOLD YOU THAT SILENCE WAS WORSE THAN DEATH TO ME! AT LEAST I DRESSED UP THE TALE AS FICTION!
THINLY VEILED, AND WAS YOUR NOVEL A SUCCESS...?
DO NOT TOY WITH ME. YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL IT'S BEEN SOLD THE WHOLE WORLD OVER--!
HE WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU KNEW IT, TOO...
SHUFF
...THAT YOU UNDERSTOOD THE PRICE FOR YOUR FOLLY.

IT IS DONE, FATHER, BUT...THE SCHOLAR SAID THINGS THAT...TROUBLE ME.
HE SAID THAT YOU WERE INSANE WHEN HE MET YOU. HE SAID THAT I AM...THE CHILD OF THAT INSANITY.
IT'S TRUE, QZTR. WE WERE ALL DRIVEN MAD FOR A TIME BY OUR ASCENSION...
...ALL EXCEPT FOR MY ENEMY, WHO WAS QUITE MAD BEFORE WE CROSSED OVER.
IT'S A NICE BIT OF IRONY THAT I FIND SOMEWHAT COMFORTING: THAT HE WAS DRIVEN TEMPORARILY SANE.
NOW COME, MY MIGHTY LAWBRINGER. THERE ARE MANY MORE WAYWARD SOULS OUT THERE THAT REQUIRE NEGATION.

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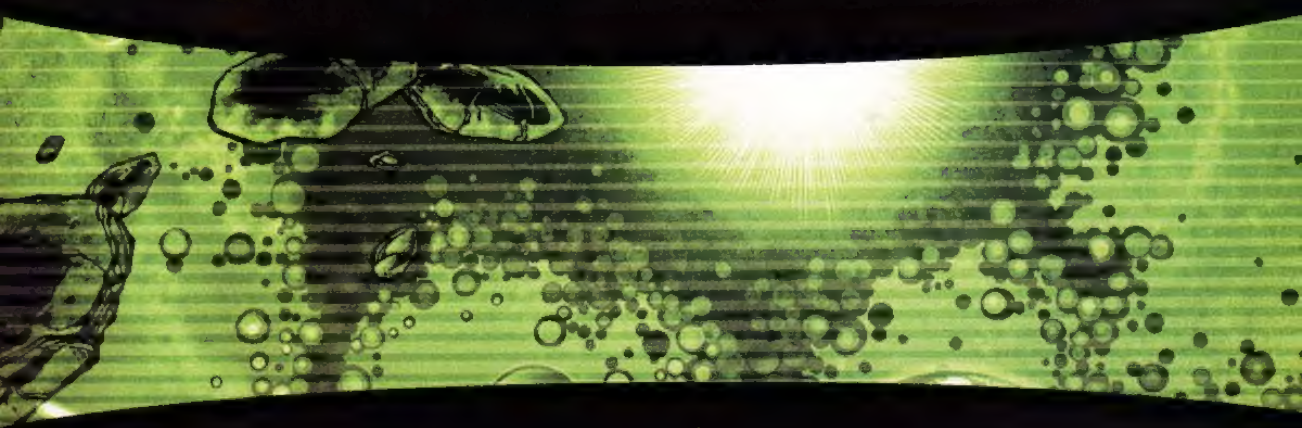

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